City of
Saskatoon

CITY OF SASKATOON

2008 PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

Presented to City Council - March 16, 2009

INTRODUCTION

With the support of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, the City of Saskatoon will strive, on a continuous basis, to improve the delivery of services to our citizens.

We will continue with our work of building a new corporate culture where creativity and innovation lead Saskatoon to be recognized as the hallmark of municipal government efficiency.

This annual report summarizes the improvements made by each of the five departments in 2008.

Murray Totland
City Manager

COMMUNITY SERVICES

New Public Skating Schedule

A new public skating schedule was implemented in Fall 2008. The new schedule has increased the total number of hours for public skating available to the public by 3% to 385 total hours, decreased the amount of staff required from 12 to 8, decreased the public skating total staff hours throughout the season by approximately 130 hours, reduced staff turnover by increasing the individual hours offered to staff per week, and created an opportunity to sell an additional 70 hours or $13,510 worth of prime time ice throughout the fall and winter season.

Can/Bottle Recycling Program

A recycling program was implemented at Holiday Park Golf Course. Thirty-two can/bottle recycling containers were installed on each tee box and around the clubhouse. Revenue from the recycling program for the 2008 golf season totalled more than $4,500.

Second Point-of-Sale Terminal

A second point-of-sale terminal was installed at the Wildwood Golf Course in August, 2008. The second terminal allowed for faster processing of customers and a reduction in waiting times for patrons during peak operational periods.

Elimination of Second Set of Plans for Residential Permits

The Building Standards Branch now requires that only one set of residential plans be submitted in support of a building permit application for a one or two unit dwelling. In the past, two sets of residential plans were received and after the plan review, one copy was returned to the applicant and one was kept for our records and also scanned. This new process has saved the applicant from having to make a second copy of the plans and increased staff efficiency and accuracy by eliminating the need to copy all requirements noted on one set of drawings to the second set. An added benefit is the reduction in hard copy drawings that were previously stored for a five-year period giving more room for storage and making it much easier for the inspector to find the larger drawings required for commercial inspections.

Campground Booking System

In 2008, an electronic booking program was implemented at Gordon Howe Campground, replacing the manual, paper-based process for campground management and site bookings. The new application provides the campground staff with efficiencies in managing site bookings, reporting and tracking, and reduces errors. The electronic booking program also allows staff to process check-ins and check-outs quicker and reduces wait times for customers.

Leisure Guide Printing and Distribution

In 2008, the number of Leisure Guides printed and distributed were reduced by encouraging areas outside of Saskatoon to utilize the Internet instead of paper copies. This change resulted in reduced printing and distribution of approximately 13,300 copies of the Leisure Guide per season, for an annual savings of $10,500.

New Low Income LeisureCard Program

In 2008, the Accessibility Program, which allows qualified low income Saskatoon residents the opportunity to participate in recreation activities offered by the City of Saskatoon, changed from issuing Courtesy Passes three times per year to the issuance of annual LeisureCards. Modifications to the Point-of-Sale/Membership System allows for the efficient issuance and tracking of the usage of these LeisureCards. Clerical time saved with this new program is approximately 60 hours per year due to the elimination of the manual process involved with approving and distributing courtesy passes three times per year.

Institutional Agency Database

In 2008, an automated process was put in place to consolidate the information contained on institutional agencies (a term referring to any government agency, non-profit organization, or institution that is not required to obtain a business license) and allow for reporting through the Management Reporting System. Authorized staff are now able to run reports to obtain current information without delay and without involving Systems staff. Automating the process and the reports improved the distribution and timeliness of information and reduced the amount of Systems' staff time required to gather the information by approximately 30 hours per year.

Business License Workflow Enhancements

Enhancements to the Business License workflow now allow authorized staff to process non-routine Business License issuances without the involvement of Systems staff. Prior to these enhancements, Systems' staff assistance was required in processing corrections and non-routine withdraws or suspensions of licenses. Systems' support time will be reduced by approximately 80 hours per year.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Blue Cross Online

Benefits can now be enrolled/changed/terminated online instead of reports being sent to Blue Cross once a month. This allows enrolments to be inputted immediately rather than being stockpiled until after the last hourly payroll of the month. An employees' policy/identification number can be looked up in the system instead of having to email Blue Cross. This change has a time-saving aspect to it (although minimal), but there is also increased accuracy as the status of an employee's benefits can be monitored to ensure they are correct.

Streamlining Ordering Process – Holiday Park Golf Course

An electronic funds transfer payment system was set up outside the normal accounts payable process for the prepayment of lounge purchases at the Holiday Park Golf Course. This process eliminated the previous need for staff to manually request cheques and deliver payment to the vendor prior to filling the order. As staff no longer have to pick up and deliver cheques, the time savings is two to three hours a week, during the golf season.

Automation of Accounting Processes

Numerous processes were automated, including revenue collection uploads, interdepartmental charges, cash receipt tracking, and light and water bank reconciliations. These changes resulted in increased accuracy and staff time savings of approximately 10-15 hours per month.

Online Parking Ticket Payments

This process was introduced to allow customers to make parking ticket payments online using credit cards. Time and cost savings are realized as these payments had previously been processed by either our cashiers or remittance processing systems. For six months in 2008, we processed 7,199 parking tickets at an average of 15 seconds per payment for a time savings of 30 hours. In addition, it is a convenience for the customer, who can pay their tickets any time they want, instead of coming down to City Hall during office hours, or mailing it in.

Parking Ticket Reports for Outstanding Tickets

This report gives customer service representatives a listing of outstanding tickets for a customer, indicating ticket status, which tickets require immediate payments, and where the payment must be made. This information normally would have taken approximately five minutes to tabulate and now takes less than 30 seconds. This function is used daily when a customer requests a list of outstanding tickets. For tickets on impounded vehicles alone, it is estimated that use of this

report has saved approximately eight hours of staff time per month since implemented in July 2008.

Cashiers Displaying Ticket Payment Amount

This change allows the cashier system to access the parking ticket database and retrieve the current amount owing for parking tickets. Further, the cashier will receive an "alert" if the ticket is at a 'warrant status' and must be paid at the Police Station. The time saving is approximately two minutes per ticket. Along with being more efficient customer service, a review of tickets paid in 2008 with late payment charges outstanding indicates a staff time saving of nine hours per month since July 2008.

Online Meter Reading

The Online Meter Reading application allows a customer to enter their meter read online. The productivity gain for the Treasurer's Office Utility Billing Section is in time saved in not having to manually enter these reads, or the reads left on the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system. Since implementation in September 2008, approximately 2,049 online reads were uploaded for a time savings of 35 staff hours. It is also an increase in customer service, as customers can enter the read at any time that is convenient to them, and do not have to mail in the cards or make a phone call with their read.

FIRE AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Computer Aided Dispatch System

The new computer aided dispatch system (Fire Dispatch Management) was implemented in 2008 and has improved dispatch capabilities and generation of reports. Also, having internal corporate staff to provide technical support saves time and has resulted in a reduction in operating and maintenance costs of $25,000 annually.

Emergency Medical Services Equipment Tracking System

Saskatoon Fire and Protective Services (SFPS) has implemented an Emergency Medical Services Equipment Tracking System to assist with the return of Department equipment that is sent to hospitals with patients. In the last quarter of 2008, this system has resulted in a marked improvement in the return of SFPS property. The initiative has also allowed us to re-create a store supply in each station, in addition to creating a central storage of back-up equipment. Previously, the Department was regularly replacing used medical equipment such as head blocks, neck braces, backboards, etc. that were never returned. The implementation of a decontamination (cleaning) facility at one of our stations, combined with the tracking system, will result in approximately $10,000 in annual savings providing for a reduction in the operating funds allocated to the overall EMS equipment budget.

Emergency Measures

The new dedicated Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) became fully operational in November 2008. In the 2008 Capital Budget, Fire and Protective Services originally proposed $386,000 for EOC enhancements to be jointly funded (50/50) through the Joint Emergency Preparedness Program (JEPP) with the Provincial and Federal Governments. Saskatoon Fire and Protective Services offered the Province a working partnership with respect to emergency planning and preparedness, to work closely with the Province in the development of overall planning and mitigation of evacuations from the north due to fire and/or flood situations. This partnership has seen the Province provide, at no cost, critical emergency software (E-Team) and JEPP funding to purchase eight laptop computers dedicated to the Emergency Operations Centre. This working partnership combined with the dedication to emergency planning by the Emergency Planning Committee and the EMO Coordinator resulted in a recommendation to City Council reducing the project from $90,000 to $60,000 (50% City share). This provided for a substantial cost saving while fully integrating the City's EOC with the Provincial EOC and improving the mitigation of emergency situations affecting the City and the Province.

Bulk Purchase of Apparatus

In late 2007, City Council approved the bulk purchase of five fire apparatus (three pumpers, one heavy rescue truck and one bush truck) in the 2008 Capital Budget. Normally, fire apparatus are replaced at the end of their serviceable life or after 15 years of front-line service. These five

apparatus were approaching the end of their service life, and were scheduled for replacement in 2008, 2009, and 2010. These apparatus were experiencing recurring mechanical problems making them very inefficient for day-to-day operations. Due to the length of delivery time for custom-built fire apparatus, the strength of the Canadian dollar at the time, a fixed manufacturer's price, and a savings based on three apparatus being built exactly the same, it was agreed that replacing all the apparatus at once would result in a substantial saving. This bulk purchase also allowed the Department to increase its reserve apparatus from two to three engines.

Also, with approval of the new east side Fire Station which included one rescue pumper, approval was given to add this additional pumper to the bulk purchase. The fourth pumper is being purchased for the same price offered in the above tender, resulting in a cost saving of approximately $60,000 per pumper.

Overall, the entire purchase realized savings of approximately $240,000 over individual custom-built fire apparatus purchases.

Turnout Gear

Fifty sets of fire fighter protective clothing (turnout gear) have been purchased under our current Blanket Order. This purchase will outfit new recruits, replace worn gear and satisfy present needs for spare gear. The bulk purchase at current prices will result in a savings of $35,000 for 50 sets of gear ($700 per set).

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

Snow and Ice

Three districts were created in the city during the winter to clear snow and ice. Staff were assigned to the same district for the season which allowed them to become familiar with the routes they were to cover, as well as obstructions and surface defects on the streets, such as raised manhole covers. This resulted in a reduction in equipment and infrastructure repairs and an increase in the level of service.

Underground Sanitary Sewer Detention

Two underground sanitary sewer detention tanks were constructed in the Confederation Drive area - a 1.5 million litre storage tank in Dundonald Park, and a 2.0 million litre storage tank near Bennett Place. The increase in the amount of available storage to 3.5 million litres will significantly reduce the amount of basement flooding in the area.

Impound Lot Management System Software (iLot)

In conjunction with the creation of the new vehicle impound lot, Impound Lot Management System (iLot) software was implemented to track and monitor the flow of vehicles, fees, etc. This web-based program allows for multiple users at multiple locations (Infrastructure Services, Treasurer's, Saskatoon Police Service) the ability to view and instantly update an electronic file pertaining to an impounded vehicle. It tracks the life cycle of an impounded vehicle and provides a vital link for all users, which is important as the facility is staffed and operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Besides recording registered owner information, the reason/location for impoundment, tow truck invoices and calculation of daily storage fees, the program also has the ability to store digital photographs of unclaimed vehicles that have been disposed of by the City. The iLot program has reduced telephone calls/emails/faxes between departments by approximately 50%, and has decreased the amount of time and volume of paper required to operate a manual vehicle impounding system.

Chronic Offenders Parking Enforcement (COPE)

In November 2008, the COPE Squad, which is funded from the $40 late fee that is added to a parking ticket after there has been a default conviction, commenced seizing vehicles with delinquent parking tickets. From November 18 to 30, crews seized 38 vehicles, of which the highest outstanding fee was $5,020. In the first two weeks, 4,320 outstanding parking tickets were paid, compared to 3,711 during a similar time period the previous year, and the total collected was $126,655, compared to $79,860 in 2007, a 59% increase. In addition, voluntary compliance of parking fine payments has increased.

City-Wide Transportation Model

A computer-based, city-wide electronic model of the transportation network was developed which has reduced the time required to determine existing traffic flows and traffic flow projections by approximately 90%. In addition, the impacts of adding or removing roads within the system can be quickly evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

Idling Guidelines

A policy outlining guidelines to limit idling times for all City-owned or leased vehicles and equipment was approved. This has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7,589 tonnes and save approximately 1,600 litres of fuel or $14,500. It will also contribute to a healthier work environment and an efficient use of City resources.

Vehicle and Equipment Parts Machining

Improvements to machining equipment were completed, which are estimated to save $50,000 annually by allowing the City to fabricate parts internally rather than sourcing OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) parts.

Vehicle Servicing Improvement

The acquisition of a Ford OEM VCM (Original Equipment Manufacturer; Vehicle Communication Module) scanner at a cost of $4,500, has allowed the City to repair/reprogram vehicles rather than sending them to the dealer, which has saved in excess of $5,500 to date. These savings will continue until Ford changes their VCM, which is estimated to be in 2012.

Roadway Rehabilitation/Restoration

Traditionally, the approach to repair or restore roadways was to follow a worst-first method (treat the worst conditions first). A roadway had to have deteriorated significantly before it was repaired, usually resulting in more expensive repairs. Research conducted showed that if nothing was done to a roadway until it failed, it may last only 15 years. However, if intermediate treatments are done before the roadway fails (is in fair condition) its service life would be significantly extended, with a possible savings over the life of the roadway as high as 50%. The approach was therefore changed to follow the principle of continuing intervention as opposed to worst-first.

UTILITY SERVICES

Operator-in-Training Program

A Water Treatment Plant Operations Manual was completed and distributed to all operations staff and, along with Standard Operating Procedures, has been placed where the information is readily accessible when required for a particular area or task. These documents provide consistent up-to-date information on new or modified procedures and legislation on processes and equipment, allowing for a more efficient use of resources.

Project Engineer Orientation Manual

The implementation of orientation manuals for project engineers has provided new staff with clarity of expectations within their jobs, safety orientation, Capital Project procedures, answers to commonly asked questions, as well as supporting documentation and the location of relevant reference materials. The orientation manual is used as a valuable guide, resulting in increased productivity and services provided by the project engineers, particularly early on in their careers.

Maintenance Facility

With the addition of the new Maintenance Facility, all parts, material, and equipment have been centralized to the new stores area within the facility. In addition, a critical spares inventory system is being developed to provide a list of critical spare parts and equipment to ensure there is an adequate supply; thereby, reducing downtime in some areas of the water treatment process.

Street Lighting

Saskatoon Light and Power has set a standard that all new and replacement steel street light poles will be galvanized. A schedule has been developed for testing existing steel poles for deterioration due to rust and new pole painting specifications that will prolong the life of existing steel street light poles. Poles in poor condition are replaced before they fail. This new systematic approach will reduce future maintenance costs (i.e. repainting less often and fewer replacements). There are approximately 19,000 steel street light poles in our system at a replacement cost of $460 plus installation per pole.

Fibre Optic Cables

Network fibre optic cables have been installed in the downtown network system and in Saskatoon Light and Power's substations throughout the city for communication requirements. This will allow Saskatoon Light and Power to lease out fibres to third parties, resulting in increased revenue. The rental of duct space and fibres is expected to generate up to $40,000 in 2009 and continual revenue thereafter.

Digger/Bucket Crawler

A narrow digger/bucket crawler was purchased that can pass through a 35" opening to do work in back yards which are not accessible to the Utility's normal equipment. It will also be used to work on lighting in areas such as park pathways. This equipment will limit or eliminate damage to surrounding landscaping and the resulting restoration costs. In the past, rental cranes were used to lift transformers and/or poles into customer's backyards and any required digging had to be done by hand. This results in a savings of at least $40,000 per year.

Leasing Storage Building

A storage building has been leased on Avenue N South and 17th Street West. This space will be used for storing Christmas decorations, motorized equipment, and for dielectric testing of insulated bucket trucks. Both the facility and the outdoor area will be used as a training centre (e.g. apprentices). This location will also be used as a staging yard for projects on the west side of the City. Leasing this storage building has made it possible to use the space at Saskatoon Light and Power's existing building on Brand Road more efficiently.

General Contractor Work

Saskatoon Light and Power's staff became their own general contractor for the construction of a network vault in 2008 and will act as a general contractor for a second vault in 2009. Staff also constructed ductlines that produced significant savings. The decision to act as a general contractor was in response to the increased costs quoted due to the construction boom in Saskatoon. Approximate savings for the one network vault was $125,000 (30%) and the ductline project resulted in an approximate saving of $74,000 (60%).

Installation of Specialized Equipment

Partial discharge sensoring equipment has been installed on switchgear at several City substations. This sensoring equipment will assist in deferring replacement of the switchgear and provide advance warning before potential problems occur.

Corona rings have been installed on many of the City's 138 kV transmission line insulators. These rings prevent further deterioration of the insulators and associated hardware and replacement costs.

Primary network interrupters continue to be installed on Saskatoon Light and Power's network system. These primary network interrupters will improve primary protection, improve safety for the general public and the Utility staff, improve switching capabilities, has alarm monitoring to prevent potential failure, and aids in troubleshooting. These monitoring capabilities provide useful load information for operations and planning.

Pre-employment Strategy for Aboriginal People

The City of Saskatoon, in partnership with the Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatoon Tribal Council, and Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies worked together to provide training for Aboriginal people interested in a career as a Transit Operator. The program was developed to assist in preparing successful Aboriginal applicants for potential Transit Operator positions. 2008 was the second year that the program has been administered and it has been the most successful intake to date, resulting in the hiring of two Operators from this initiative.

Qualification Change to the Transit Operator Job Description

Applicants for Operator positions were previously required to have a 2A learner's license to be considered for an interview and ultimately to be hired. In 2008, this requirement/qualification was changed to a Class 5 license, enabling Saskatoon Transit to consider applicants who did not have their 2A learner's license and make conditional offers subject to successful completion of the required 2A learner's license within the first two weeks of employment. Nineteen Transit Operators have been hired through this initiative, and all new Operators requiring their 2A learner's license have obtained it within the mandated two-week period. The addition of these new employees has contributed to a significant reduction to overtime costs at Saskatoon Transit. Transit operations experienced a 2% decrease in overtime from 2007 to 2008, amounting to approximately $216,000.

Marketing Strategy

Saskatoon Transit collaborated with the City's Communications Branch to distribute a flyer advertising employment vacancies and specifically highlighting the hiring qualification change (i.e. apply with a Class 5 license and get trained by Transit for your 2A learner's license), making it easier for people to apply to become a Transit Operator. This initiative resulted in a

400% increase in the number of applications previously received for the Transit Operator position (i.e. 20 applications to 96 applications).

Change to Customer Service Centre Operating Hours

In 2006, two customer self-help initiatives were introduced including Phone and Go, and Click and Go. Positive public use of these self-help programs resulted in an initiative to utilize existing daytime Customer Service Centre employees in a more efficient manner. In 2008, the Saskatoon Transit Customer Service Centre hours of operation were reduced, ending product sales at 5:30 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m. and ending telephone Customer Service Centre assistance at 7:30 p.m. instead of 9:00 p.m. These changes allowed Saskatoon Transit to better utilize existing staffing hours during the day, which was the time of greatest customer need to interact directly with Customer Service staff. Line-ups for product sales at the Customer Service Centre have been reduced, and telephone inquiries are better attended to including a reduction in the number of unanswered calls and a reduction in customer waiting times for information. In addition to improving our service to the public, improved shift start and finish times have enhanced staff morale. These changes have been achieved within Saskatoon Transit's existing Operating Budget.

Dedicated Bus Pick-up/Drop-off Location at Credit Union Centre

In 2008, Saskatoon Transit worked with Credit Union Centre (CUC) to provide a dedicated bus pick-up/drop-off location for patrons attending large events at CUC (e.g. concerts). This service enhancement has created a more efficient manner in which passengers are transported to and from CUC and additionally resulting in an improved public image of both Saskatoon Transit and CUC.

Access Transit Ridership

In 2008, Access Transit provided 110,120 rides, which is an increase of 2% over the previous year, while at the same time, trip denials were reduced by 6% over the same period. This is the second year in a row where revenue trips have increased and denials have decreased. The improved service is a result of many factors, including two more buses, increased service hours, and increased staff efficiencies.

Transit Ridership Increase

In 2008, Saskatoon Transit experienced a 5.2% increase in ridership. Saskatoon Transit is forecasting a continued increase into the future due to the success of the University UPass referendum in 2008, partnerships with other organizations/agencies to implement an employee/employer cost-shared type of UPass, the Discounted Bus Pass Program, and additional marketing initiatives.

Smart Driver Program

In 2008, 101 Transit Operators were trained in the Smart Driver Program. The Program curriculum includes fuel conservation, hazard awareness, and reducing driver stress by practicing "smart driver" techniques. This initiative will contribute to reduced WCB claims and operational costs (e.g. fewer accidents, decrease in fuel consumption).

Specialized Maintenance Training

In 2008, Transit's Maintenance Section focused on specialized training for its mechanics including HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) training and Vansco Multiplexing (technical interaction of all electrical systems on the bus). This initiative has enhanced skills and knowledge of current employees and has contributed to more effective and efficient repairs to both older and newer buses. The Maintenance Section has also taken advantage of training services offered through current vendors with zero impact to the operating budget. Of note, SIAST instructors are attending technical training programs coordinated by Saskatoon Transit to ensure they are updated on the latest heavy duty vehicle technology.

Oil Product Enhancement

In 2008, Saskatoon Transit Maintenance changed its entire fleet from running on a regular oil product to a synthetic oil product. As a result of using a more advanced oil product, the Maintenance Section is experiencing fewer transmission, engine, and differential breakdowns. The economic impact of this change will be measured through 2009.

Water Laboratory

A method which reduces the amount of time required to set up and analyze time-sensitive water samples was introduced to be used during hours in which overtime rates apply (i.e. weekends, holidays, etc.) In these situations, the savings in staff time is greater than the incremental cost of the test.

Leaf and Grass Program

Efficiencies through economies of scale, were realized through an increase in registrants in the Leaves and Grass Program from 400 in 2007 to 840 in 2008. With the increased participation, trucks were able to collect at more locations along the same basic routes. The growth of this program and increased usage of the compost depots resulted in a 55% increase in organics diversion, keeping 3,700 tonnes of organics out of the landfill, thus extending its life expectancy.

Landfill Working Safety Supervisors

Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) regulations have deemed the landfill to be a work site, and as such, requires that a supervisor be staffed on site at all times for safety purposes. In 2008, a group of landfill staff were selected to be working safety supervisors. Through specialized, ongoing training, they serve as site supervisors in the event the senior supervisor must leave the site. This has resulted in an increased awareness of safety-related issues and practices on the part of staff. Consequently, many potentially hazardous situations/procedures have been identified and eliminated as a result of this increased awareness.

West Side Compound

A compound was opened on the west side of the city to assist in the storage and distribution of garbage containers to new and existing homes. In the past, there was only one compound, located on the east side of the city. By opening another one on the west side, savings were realized through reduced travel time and fuel consumption.

Vehicles & Equipment

A power lift tailgate was installed on the new Utility Complaints vehicle to assist in heavy lifting. Power end gates will become standard equipment in new trucks as the older ones are replaced. This allows one worker to do the work that had, in the past, required two.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) transponders were issued to private waste haulers allowing them to use the automated scale at the landfill, reducing wait-times for themselves and other customers.

The garbage collection truck replacement schedule was changed from 15 to 10 years. Replacing the trucks more frequently will reduce the amount of downtime and the inherent inefficiencies associated with breakdowns.

Backup cameras were installed on all garbage collection trucks to reduce the amount of damage caused to property and utility lines, and to improve safety for both the operator and the general public.

Utility Complaints

The city has been divided into three sectors enabling the Utility Complaints staff to become more familiar with their specific area. This has reduced travel time and overlap, and improved response time.

Garbage Container Conversion

Approximately 2,300 homes were converted to individual roll-out garbage containers. This reduced back alley fires, vandalism, illegal dumping, and damage to collection trucks.

The garbage container conversions schedule was revised to increase productivity and defer the need for an additional side loader truck in 2008. The revised schedule optimized collections and reduced overtime.